

ADELAIDE INSTITUTE

PO Box 3300
Adelaide 5067
Australia
Mob: 61+401692057
Email: info@adelaideinstitute.org
Web: <http://www.adelaideinstitute.org>

Online
ISSN 1440-9828



March 2011 No 555

- continued from Newsletter No 554.

Such an ideological mindset in science can only help the Islamic-inspired world view that claims science is an open system where knowledge is forever emerging and developing theoretical suppositions, and where ideologically encrusted theories need to be revised and reviewed.

Science philosopher Popper's terminology for this process of revising theoretical considerations is to subject them to a 'falsifying process'. This is the essence of a scientific process that aims to make the theoretical mesh ever finer and thereby hauling in more of our world's REALITY.

The American philosopher C S Peirce sums it up in the Fallibilism Principle that he could have taken from Islam: all our knowledge is fallible, we as humans are incomplete and fallible, and Islam adds: only God is complete and absolute!

With reference to the so-called 'climate-change deniers', there is regular blogging activity on the Internet devoted entirely to tracking these politically incorrect individuals, these Australian climate change sceptics at: <http://watchingthedeniers.wordpress.com/2011/02/16/liberal-party-war-on-science-cory-bernardi-joins-deniers-in-attacking-bom/>

Our bus transport from Olympic Hotel to the Congress venue, Niroo Research Institute, is flawless even in Teheran's bumper-to-bumper traffic. As Peter Hartung noted: 'There are four lanes marked on the road but somehow this develops on numerous occasions into a six-lane highway'.



Our driver, a war veteran of the almost decade-long war begun in 1980 between Iraq and Iran on account of United States of America supporting Iraq, reminds me of Saddam Hussain.



Teheran traffic – note the fifth lane is developing ahead to the right and soon there will be a sixth lane. It's magic that so few accidents occur under such conditions, but then self-interest causes most drivers to compromise when manoeuvring their vehicle and yield to another, thereby avoiding accidents.

4. Opening Ceremony/Congress Begins Day One: 5 February 2011

A delight for all attendees is the receipt of a lovely carrying bag, an ideal laptop carrying case, which among other items contains a copy of the *Iranian Journal of Biotechnology*, a special 280+page *Issue 5-7 February 2011* with the over 300 extracts submitted by individuals attending the conference. As well there are two A4-sized cards that schematically represent the congress program in outline, and the accompanying 30-page bi-lingual English-Farsi program that details the various sessions to be held throughout the three-day congress. The congress language is English and Farsi, and there is a perfectly organised arrangement to have a headphone for simultaneous translation into English for those who do not understand Farsi.

As is customary in Iran any public event begins with a recital from Holy Quran, followed by the National Anthem. This enables the 'wayward' who on account of politeness do not wish to terminate a never-ending discussion, something that's normal in Iran. So, while individuals settle down and find their allotted seats, the expressed religious sentiments set the tone for the forthcoming proceedings.

I recall how in Australia during the late 1950s it was still customary to stand when the National Anthem was played, then proceedings would begin, for example, in the picture theatre the film screening would begin in silent expectations as we sang 'God Save The Queen'.

After these obligatory reflective comments the mood is set and serious matters can begin. On stage overhead on the large video screen a clip features information about Iranian scientists and philosophers such as Avicenna, Muhammad-Zakariya-ye Razi, Abu Rayhan-e Biruni, Allameh Tabatabaei, Nasir al-Din Tusi and Mulla Sadra Birouni.

The Introduction to the video spells it out:

Iran has been the cradle of many distinguished savants and philosophers. During past years, the borders of this country have been exposed to many changes, which has fluctuated the location of these great people's tombs. Accordingly, other countries claim these scientists as their own.

Therefore, the officials of the executive committee of the 2nd International Congress on Bioethics have decided to provide the participants of the congress with the biography of these eminent personalities to be displayed at the congress.

Among these scientists, there are a number of contemporary authorities to be introduced to foreign scientists and participants.

This is detailed on large posters that are displayed in all the various foyers and passages of the Congress Centre, and anyone who is taking a break from attending proceedings and is ready for a cup and snack cannot miss this poster display.

The Congress Chairman, **His Excellency, Dr S M Hosseini**, Minister of Culture and Islamic Guidance – and like all congress speakers – uses his 20 minutes to impress on the attendees the importance of Bioethics as a topic for discussion.

Professor A S Lotfi, Executive Secretary of the Congress and Director General of NIGEB, enlarges on the congress program, rightly stressing what illustrious speakers are about to thrash out contentious issues and how adopting an ethical imperative is important in any biotechnological research.

From the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, **Professor Radovan Komel**, raises ethical and safety issues emerging from recent developments in genomics and biotechnology.

Dr A Sadri, Director of the Islamic, Scientific, Educational and Cultural Organisation, regional office Tehran, reads the Address of the Director-General of ISESCO, **Dr Abdulaziz Othman Altajwairi**.

Ayatolla Dr Mahdi Havadi Tehrani, professor of Islamic law and philosophy at Qum Islamic Seminary, details the systematic approach adopted by Islamic Bioethicists.

The Minister of Higher Education and Research, Niger Republic, His Excellency **Dr Mahamad Laouali Dan Dah**, outlines the developments made in Niger's tertiary sector. Later he and Dr Lotfi sign an agreement designed to ensure research cooperation between NIGEB and Niger.

The late morning tea/coffee break takes us into prayer and lunch-time until around 2pm. Besides lavish dining there is, as stated above, the opportunity to view an impressive poster display held in various foyers of the congress venue. As well, here individuals have also illustrated Bioethics topics, either from their own research or that of others, but which could not be accommodated in the official 3-day program. An extensive scientific book exhibition compliments the poster display.





A long shot of the Main Hall that deceptively shrinks the large front section of rows of seats into a single row.

5. Day Two: 6 February 2011 – Plenary Lectures

Dr Seyed Abolhasan Makhzan-e-Mousavi, Director of the Ahle Beit Higher Education Centre, strikes a chord with his presentation that compares the secular/materialistic concepts with that of Islamic concepts, and he concludes that there are two enemies confronting Bioethical considerations: Commerce and negligence.

Professor Christopher Stückelberger, Director of the Geneva, Switzerland, based www.globethics.net Foundation offers his services with a data bank of over 600.000 full-text documents on any ethical topic for free downloading. His other presentation, 'Responsible to God: Christian-Muslim Perspectives on Biotechnology and Bioethics for the Common Good' draws a much admired comparison between the Christian and Muslim religion. Amazingly, maybe not so after all, there is mention about the three Abrahamic Religions but Jewish matters are not discussed throughout the three-day event. I certainly found it refreshing to have individuals point to psychological studies, then declare such to be a mere expression of an opinion with some statistical data, and we know all about liars, bloody liars and statisticians. In our western society psychology as a subject has become an instrument of oppression, especially used by those who cannot tolerate another viewpoint, for example, on matters Holocaust-Shoah. Wonder why such individuals would like to certify as insane dissenters who refuse to believe in their rubbish?

Dr Linda B Mora Diaz, of the Venezuela Institute of Scientific Investigation, titles her talk, 'Bioethics without Borders: A moral reformulation of bioethics based on ethical principles of socialism in the XXI century'.

Professor Irene Anne Jillson, School of Nursing & Health Studies, Georgetown University, Washington, USA, presents her paper in considered detail: 'Global Health Ethics: Toward Common Principles and their practical application to Health Research, Clinical Care, and System management'.

Professor Abbas S Lotfi, Director-General, NIGEB, offers a perceptive insight into: 'Cultural Islamic Teachings, public Supervision and protection are the most important factors in the area of bioethics'.

Professor Mohammed Esmail Akhari, raises the issue so often neglected within cultures where rationalism prevails at the expense of spiritual values: 'Spiritual care, neglected aspect of health in cancer management'. It is sad that all too often in western nations the psychological well-being of individuals is managed through 'education and medication', rather than in a self-reflective manner that enables individuals to make contact with their non-material selves.



- during proceedings together with Prof Ghasem Ahangari we take a quick break and enjoy our fruit and tea. The gentlemen who ensured that our dining service remained unrivalled all wore ties!

7. Day Three: 7 February 2011 – Plenary Lectures



Together with Professors Mousavi and Ahmad I chair this morning's first session.

The list of speakers is impressive and extensive but I must mention **Professor Seyed Reza Mousavi** from the Shaihid Beheshti University of Medical Science's surgery department whose 'Role of Medical Ethics in Health Economics' strikes me as an exceptional presentation. As a practising surgeon he knows how devastating a lapse of 'social trust' is to patients, as is occurring in a number of western health systems where money and costs of services is breaking down such trust. Professor Mousavi could have been a Kantian philosopher who also maintains that behaviour does not occur in a vacuum but is always embedded in the Cat3gorical Imperative.

The Director-General of National Centre for Research, Khartoum, Sudan, **Professor Mohammed Ahmad** speaks of the promising beginnings Bioethical studies has made in his country.

Dr Abbas Kahk, the Supreme Leader's representative at Forest and Rangelands Organisation claims there are more than a thousand verses in Holy Quran directly relevant to bioethics. He also claims that his office is directly responsible for Teheran becoming a greener city, something I certainly noticed

when I arrived on 4 February and saw on the drive from the airport to the Olympic Hotel beautifications progressing since my November 2010 visit. So much for the power of Islam!

Dr Darakhshandeh Kokub, Director of P & B Pakistan Science Foundation, briefly reports how her organisation is managing its programs with a view to ethical imperatives being implemented.

One specifically esoteric paper is delivered by **Professor Mohammad Lengenhausen**, lecturer at the Imam Khomeini Education Research Institute, Qom, who in most minute detail dissects Avicenna's Practical Philosophy and how that impacts on Bioethical matters.

This is followed by **Dr Mohsen Javadi**, lecturer at Qom University, who elaborates on 'The Coherence of Medical Ethics and Jurisprudence', thus again illustrating what other presenters did that Islam offers a comprehensive world-view, something the secular-driven materialistic world view of western democracies has so successfully fractured into myriad of choices that cause individuals to flee into continuous addictive sense-gratification until self-destruction. The imperative most western politicians blindly follow the advocates of the 'bitch-goddess of change', without realizing that human nature in essence does not change at all. It is these 'change' advocates who are successfully deluding individuals with their personal ideology, which in most instances is grounded in Talmud.

Dr Ali Karami, Research Centre for Molecular Biology, Baqyatollah University of Medical Science, brings everyone back to earth with his presentation 'Biosecurity for Life Science Laboratories', wherein he elaborates on how it is important to have security systems in place that safeguard research results and other related matters, such as theft and sabotage from without.

This is followed by the Director of Avicenna Institute, **Dr Mohammad Mehdi Akhundi**, and his perceptive presentation: 'Islamic Law and the principle of respect for human vulnerability and personal integrity in medical research and practice'.

8. Three Day Congress Themes: The Afternoon Sessions

The above morning sessions are augmented by three afternoon sessions in Room 1, Room 2 and in the Main Hall, designated A, B and C, with three individuals chairing each session that are set down for two-hours, beginning at 2pm and ending at 4 pm.

Room 1: A: Theoretical and philosophical principles and basis of Bioethics.

Room 2: B: Bioethics in Islam and other Abrahamic Religions: Ethics and Stem Cells.

Main Hall: C: Applied topics of Bioethics: Ethics and Health; Ethics and Reproduction; Ethics and Cloning; Ethics in Agriculture.

On Day 1, I, together with **Dr K Haghbin** and **Dr G H Ahnagari**, chair the first afternoon session in Room 1 where I also present my paper.



Now, now – no shouting! Where was the item I was looking for in that power-point-presentation?



Dr K Haghbin keeps time while I talk ...

I try to attend most afternoon sessions moving from one room to another but find it difficult to decide which will be of interest because all sessions are interesting. I shall thus use the program notes to offer a brief overview of the topics covered in each of the three-day Afternoon Sessions.

Room 1: A:

Theoretical and philosophical principles and basis of Bioethics

Day One:

Dr K Haghbin: Can scientists meet global consensus? – we can expect group conflict.

Dr F Töben: Iranian Impulses Rejuvenating An Ethically/Intellectually Bankrupt Democratic Western World.

Dr G H Ahangari: Bioethics or ethical living.

Dr Z Moshagar: The study on the relationship between religion and bioethics foundation.

Dr A Gafari: Human dignity: contract or abstract.

Dr F Abolhasan Niaraki: Appropriate description of Ethics for Bioethics.

Day Two:

Dr Mahmoud Abbasi: Religious & Secular Ethics.

Dr Anna Gubenko: Methodological role of Global Bioethics.

Dr F Hashemi Behravani: Differences between Materialistic & Celestial viewpoint in Bioethics.

Mr Kh Yari: Islamic Bioethics for Fetus Abortion in Iran.

Mrs E Nesari: Comparative Study of Intellectual Property Rights of Biotechnology from the Perspective of International Law and Iran Law.

Dr Ashrafu Amin: Concept of Bioethics in Developing Countries like Bangladesh.

Day Three:

Dr M Fathi Najafi: Illegal behaviour with intellectual DNA.

Dr Liliana Virginia Siede: Dimensions & challenges of human tissue use in tissue engineering. Bioethical perspective.

Dr M Ziaiee: Human Cloning from the perspective of Islamic philosophers & its ethical requirements.

Dr Elena Bryzalina: The principle of Individualisation in the ethical regulation of biomedical researches.

Mrs A Heidari: Ethical and legal issues of stem cells research: information confidentiality, accessibility and information consent.

Dr Memon Inayatollah: Justification of participation of Human Subjects in phase 1 clinical trials: An ethical analysis.

Room 2: B:

Bioethics in Islam and other Abrahamic Religions:

Day One:

Dr Mahmoud Abbasi: Investigation the position of the Four Principles of Bioethics in Islamic Law.

Dr Mohsen Reza: Neuroethics and Spirituality: View From the teaching of Islam.

Dr Nanjoko Bosun: DNA Manipulation: The Pros and Cons in view of Creationism.

Mr M B Reza Ali: Islamic Bioethics Position.

Mrs Negar Khodadadi: Review of Bioethics Formation in Zoroastrian Children.

Dr A A Shojaiee: To defend Ethics based on traits or behaviour?

Day Two:

Prof Frieda Wiebe: Developing an international Information Resource on Islamic medical and Scientific Ethics.

Dr Kh Ahmad Khan Beigi: The Influence of Imamiyya Fiqh on Human Cloning and comparing it to Suni Jurists' view.

Dr M Rahmani: Cooperation of morality and politics in headway of human life.

Dr M Khaghanizadeh: Medical Ethics with the Islamic approach.

Mrs Sh Bazmi: Euthanasia from an ethical and Islamic point-of-view.

Mr H Hosseini Dehmiri: Review of process of simulation of human and other living creatures as a moral challenge for human dignity.

Mr A Shakernejad: Ethical approach of Ancient Persians: Literatures in determining norms of Medical Ethics, relying on 'Chahar Maghale'.

Ethics and Stem Cells.

Dr M Khaghani Esfahani: Cybernetic Human: Ultra-Human or Infra-Human? A Criticism of HET from the standpoint of believing in creation.

Mrs L Bahamani: Bioethical aspects of Stem Cell researches in the past, present and future.

Dr M Hosseinkhani: Human Embryonic Stem Cell in Biomedicine with a flavour of Bioethics.

Mr H R Mahmoudi Najaf Abadi: Religious and Customary Scope of DNA Manipulation & Cloning in human & their relation to claims.

Dr E Shamsi Goshgi: Terrific light in bioethics: Use and moral development theories in Bioethics.

Day Three

Dr Nazari Tavakoli: Establishing of Religious Criteria for making use of water in direction of bioethical objectives.

Dr Hussein Ali: Religion, Ethics and Agricultural Science.

Mr R Reza Nejad: Study on importance and station of environments in Islamic teachings.

Dr M Izadi: Necessity of Environmental Morality based on God-Centre viewpoints.

Mrs H Hatami: Bioethics of Conservation of Biodiversity in Islam.

Mrs N Maghsoudi: Ethical issues come up in bio-environmental science from Islamic perspective.

Dr A Shayestehfar: Assessment regulation and the legal system on keep, purchase and sale of pets and wild view of religion.

Main Hall: C:

Applied topics of Bioethics:

Day One: Ethics and Health

Prof Dariush Farhud: Reverence of physicians, esteem of patients, health of society.

Dr Latif Latifa: Bioethical challenges in implementing self administered cervical smear for early cancer detection in rural women: A Malaysia Experience.

Dr A Motavalizadeh Ardakani: Ethical issues in biotechnology and genetic Engineering.

Dr A A Ghorbani: Bioethics and limit of Cloning.

Dr M Agha Mirsalim: DNA testing in Criminal Justice System & its ethical aspects.

Dr Parisa Zadeh Dabbagh: Ethical Challenges of Iranian model of organ transplantation; the comparative study with the UK.

Day Two: Ethics and Reproduction

Dr S T Merghati: Relationship between Ethics & Jurisprudence in the field of reproduction using ART.

Mr R Roohi: The Biomedical Research on human embryos from the perspective of Ethics, Jurisprudence & Iran Law.

Dr H Shahriari: Theoretical Principles of Gamete Donation from an Islamic Bioethics view.

Dr Anne Barnhill: IVF Embryo concerning Law and Bioethics.

Mrs N Khageh Nasari: Ethical aspects of In-Vitro Fertilisation – IVF.

Ethics and Cloning

Dr Asim Padela: Constructing Islamic Ethics-Theological underpinnings of Islamic Law & implementations for transcultural dialogue.

Dr M Mousavi: Euthanasia in Cancer patients from Islam viewpoint.

Mr O Asemani: Discussion-making on the prolongation of the life of severely diseased newborns: an analytical study upon the beginning of life issues.

Mr M Kashavarzi: Euthanasia in brain-death and non-resident spiritual states.

Day Three: Ethics in Agriculture

Dr B Mohager: Agricultural Biotechnology & Ethical dimensions.

Dr M R Reza Panah: Bioethics trace in organic production.

Mrs M Ghanbari Gahromi: genetically modified (GM) crops, bioethics & safety assessment.

Dr Nima Kiani: Applied Research on Bioethics with emphasis on environmental aspects.

Dr Z Rabiee: Bioethics and GM Food.

Mrs H Ebrahimi Nik: ethical concepts in transgenic animal generation.

Dr M A Nematollahi: Biotechnological moral & legal concerns in agriculture and foodstuffs field.

Brief Comment:

I shall not comment on any specific presentation because that would overload this report, but let me make two observations:

The sessions on stem cell research and cloning are of particular interest to me because Holy Quran does not prohibit research in this sphere because to do so does not alter what God has created but merely assists in what should be. This is a refreshing attitude and shames the individuals who in our 'free and democratic' western world oppose such on religious grounds. These opponents claim that to do such research means 'the scientist is playing God', which is a nonsense and Iran has shown, again, that scientific research is not limited by religion because religion and science need not clash at all, as some religious fundamentalists and atheists claim it should. Or, as David Brockschmidt would formulate it: 'Everybody has a right to believe but also a right to know'.

Also, there is the presentation of **Dr Hussein Ali**, *Research Officer Entomology, A.R.I. Tarnab Peshawar, Pakistan*, who managed to bring into perspective and elucidate in some depth all three concepts: 'Religion, Ethics and Agricultural Science'. The sense of Islamic harmony is conceptually not difficult to understand but not easy to realize when commercial imperatives work against it.

The Delight of Imperfection!

The subsequent Question and Answers Sessions as well as the Discussion Panel, usually timed to end around 6 or 7pm, merge easily into the evening program. And this is where transportation of the foreign guests to and from venues always worked out to perfection. Although we could not quite follow what was going on as we waited on the bus for the driver to start the engine it always ended up well with our ultimate return to the Olympic Hotel. Not a soul went missing in action!

Thus most presentations run over time and that is one criticism I make of an otherwise flawless congress organisation: time is not strictly adhered to. But I also plead guilty for not having adhered to time both while sharing the chairing of the sessions with two colleagues, and also during the delivering of my own presentation. It is this aspect that again and again arises whenever I compare the rather sterile and passive conferences held in western countries. Here in Iran there is still lively audience participation and active emotional involvement by all.

It is precisely as Dr Bijani explains it to me: **'...you never know what's next! The most unexpected happens when you least expect it but capturing that moment or rather a moment before it happens is really unique.'**

I tend to think that this is what the creative impulse is all about, or putting it a little more bluntly: If you cannot improvise and you rely on a fully-scripted day, then you had better stay in the Hollywood-think mode where artificial laughter, for example, has made zombies out of many devoted television viewers.

Here is 3.50 minute video taken with my mobile phone camera of the prize-giving ceremony that ended when I was called up on stage to complete the committee of six who presented awards and prizes to individuals who submitted the best posters and delivered the best papers:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x0UdDKUqSqM>

9. Evening Events

As is usual during such conferences the evenings are always a festive occasion. On the first night we attend a banquet hosted by the Islamic Culture And Relations Organisation where its director, **Dr Khoramshad**, briefly explains what his organisation is doing to promote Islamic understanding on a global scale.

On the second night we have an exclusive tour of NIGEB followed by a sumptuous banquet at a restaurant. The facilities of this research institute is comparable to anything I have seen in Australia, Europe South Africa or the USA. I did comment about the Iranian sanction matter by stressing that I hope the sanctions remain for a while yet because sanctions don't really work anywhere in the world on account of the human mind thriving on overcoming such artificial constructs.

Were Iran to open itself to the world, then possibly predatory capitalism would swiftly enter the local political arena and express itself locally in the form of a mad feeding frenzy of privatisation of state-owned and people-built infrastructure, much like what happened in the former Soviet Union where state enterprises were bought up for a song. There are always individuals in any political system who care nothing about national pride and who run rough-shod over those individuals who have given their life to developing the necessary infrastructure of a nation, which makes it possible to function as a sophisticated community/nation.

I can see NIGEB then becoming a market-driven research institute where honesty in research plays a secondary role to making profit. Again, in this instance I am reminded of how the AIDS industry was cranked up and since 1984 has become a multi-billion dollar industry, if not more, and that has made its founder, Robert Gallo and the patents he has on AIDS testing kits, a very rich man. I think Nancy Turner Banks is right when she claims this phenomenon is a new form of old colonialism.



Group photo of some International congress attendees before commencing their guided tour of NIGEB -



- where, for some, work never stops. Drs Hussain Ali and Fredrick Töben meeting dedicated NIGEB students who are still working late into the night.



Director General of NIGEB, Professor A S Lotfi, and the Minister of Higher Education & Research, Niger Republic, His Excellency Dr Mahamad Laouali Dan Dah.



- soon it is time to dine!



Iraq – Australia – Pakistan

A distraction: - a street scene: What are these men doing?



Yes, they're reading newspaper headlines....



Nowadays a rare sight on Teheran streets – someone driving to the market with a man resting on top of the load and needing to hurry before traffic police pick him up.

- continued in Newsletter No 556.